



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## NOTES AND COMMENTS.

---

### THE CONCEITED SEX.

It is usually agreed that man is the more conceited, and woman the vainer, sex. The superficial mind, indolently content with the surface of things, accords a ready hospitality to a distinction that spares it the trouble of thinking. The more strenuous mind of the social philosopher will not be put off with mere tags and labels. It grants the external distinction, but it insists on looking below externals. It asks whether the emotions which we call conceit and vanity are not in essence the same, borrowing the color which seems to differentiate them from the vessel that holds them. Water is water whether contained in a red vase or a green. Yet in the one case it looks red, in the other green. And so with conceit or vanity. At bottom it is simply the love of admiration. In the male sex this passion becomes a demand, in the female it is simply a desire. The more highly developed members of the male sex are conscious of the fact that they have no superiors in the whole range of organic life. But the most gifted woman always has the more gifted man to look up to. Hence man at his best proudly feels that admiration is his due; woman at her best merely hopes that it is. *He* can only look around on his equals or down on his inferiors. *She* must always look up. It is the difference in attitude that constitutes the apparent difference in the emotion. Conceit asks for admiration as a right, vanity craves it as a boon.

But here we must stop and make another distinction. In its beginnings conceit or vanity is a virtue, not a vice. It is the conscious sense of *noblesse*, obliging man to live up to his *noblesse*. It is the desire for admiration, keeping woman up to the plane of pleasing. In other words, it is a most powerful incentive to right-seeming and right-being. Exactly where the virtue shades off into a vice is a nice question to determine. But in a broad and general way we can say that whenever the consciousness of deserving admiration or the desire for admiration is overweening and overwhelming; whenever it is a lie or the cause of lies; whenever it induces the individual to be offensive, overbearing, or ridiculous; whenever it leads to the sacrifice of principle, honor, and self-respect; whenever it entails the discomfort of others—then it is a vice, and is properly stigmatized by the unpleasant name of conceit or vanity.

Now, in which sex is the inordinate love of admiration attended with the greater loss of principle, truth, and self-respect—in which does it take on the more offensive, overbearing, and ridiculous shape? That the conceit of man is more overbearing than the vanity of woman is self-evident. For man is the stronger sex, and it is the tendency of ill-directed strength to be overbearing. Undoubtedly this is a condition of

mind that is unpleasant and vexatious to other minds which are brought in contact therewith. But at least it has the merit of truthfulness. At least the man believes in himself. He credits himself with the qualities upon which he conceits himself. The fact may not be a fact; to him, however, it is a fact. But a woman's vanity is never entirely truthful, never entirely sincere. It is the wild desire to impress by appearing to be something which she is not, and which she instinctively knows she is not. It is a confession of weakness in the very attempt to put on a show of strength.

A vice that is based upon an honest misconception of fact is infinitely less harmful than a vice that is based upon a wilful distortion of fact. A lie is really the only great crime that a human being can commit. Well and wisely did the old theologians, when casting about for a name which should hold up the enemy of mankind to the uttermost detestation, brand him and stigmatize him forever as the Father of Lies. And because the vanity of women is founded upon untruth, it is more offensive and ridiculous, and entails a greater loss of principle, of honor, of self-respect, than the conceit of man.

Is it not the universal struggle of woman to look like something else than herself? The maid wants to look like her mistress, the matron like a maiden, the brazen strive to appear innocent, the innocent to appear brazen. It is not viciousness, but this same perversity of vanity, which makes the girl of the period (or, in still more modern slang, the *fin-de-siècle* girl) seek to imitate the manners and the appearance of the harridan on the streets. The blonde dyes her hair dark, the brunette bleaches it. Paint and powder are called in to conceal the defects of nature or the ravages of time. Belladonna dilates the pupils until they are larger than life. Tight corsets cramp the waist into impossible smallness. High heels give the low-statured a deceptive appearance of height. Pads fill up with falsehood the deficiencies of outline, and serve to prove that, with women at least, figures do lie. But these are commonplaces, you say. So much the worse for the sex if they are so frequent as to grow into the recognized commonplaces of life. But after all, you insist, they are mere harmless vanities. Not a bit of it. In all but intention, they are actual crimes of a very grievous sort. A crime is an offence against the designs of nature. Nature has two great ends in view—first, the progress and perfection of the race, and, second, the comfort of the individual on the journey upward. She looks with loathing upon any one who deliberately blocks her in the attempt to secure either end. She ruthlessly uses all means to clear them out of her way, and arms us with scorn and wrath so that we will aid her. Hence our hatred of crime and criminals; hence the laws which society has made against them.

Now, woman is doubly guilty, inasmuch as by outraging the true canons of dress, she both sacrifices the comfort of the individual and jeopardizes the higher evolution of the race. She forfeits her own health by taking poisonous drugs for her complexion, by using poisonous drugs on her hair, by the sudden change of clothing which that curious misnomer "full dress" entails. She forfeits her own comfort by squeezing her waist into tight corsets and her feet into tighter shoes. But it is her own individual comfort, you say, her own individual health that she sacrifices; she is a martyr to fashion. No, not a martyr, for the very word fashion indicates that women sin in this way because other women do so. Every woman, therefore, is responsible for the discomfort of the whole sex. No, not a martyr, because there are other than individual interests, other than sex interests, at stake.

If woman sacrifices her health, she thereby impairs her powers of maternity, she entails suffering upon posterity, and the possibilities of weaknesses that may plunge her descendants into errors and crimes.

In fact, there is nothing wanting save malicious intent to make the woman of the period the most frightful criminal in existence. That absence of intent would go far to absolve her in any court of morals. Ignorance of the law excuses no man, but we must allow it to excuse woman, because she is not an entirely rational being. It is her reason that is at fault, not her conscience. She means well, only she does not know. Her very vanity, harmful as it is, has an altruistic motive, a motive, moreover, that is flattering to the other sex. She sacrifices her comfort, her health, in order that she may attract men, or, rather, some particular man. Heine, who knew women, and who, like other students of the sex, loved them so dearly that he recognized all their faults, once remarked of authoresses that, when they write, one eye is on the paper, and the other on some man. To be sure, he makes an exception of the Countess Hahn-Hahn. But he explains that she only has one eye. He owns that male authors have their prejudices, that they write for or against something, for or against an idea, for or against a party, "but women always write for or against some particular man, or, to express it more correctly, on account of some particular man." Now, what is true of authoresses is true of women in all relations of life.

We have described this as an altruistic motive. Unfortunately it is not always so. The desire to attract does not always mean the desire to please, to comfort, to add to the happiness of the person in view. Or even if that is an incidental object it is not always the result, from the perplexing contrast often presented between woman's intentions and their outcome. The main object of women is conquest, power, supremacy. They want man at their pretty feet. They like to torture him, as naughty children torture flies. They like to play with him as cats play with mice. The metaphors are not perfect. Children, even naughty children, are superior to flies. Cats are superior to mice. But women find elation in the very fact that it is the superior being whom for the moment they are dominating by wiles and cunning.

If Samson were not so very strong, Delilah would not rejoice so much at contemplating his temporary weakness. If Merlin were not the wisest of men, Vivien would not take such supreme delight in making a fool of him. The vanity of women, being false in essence, rejoices in such reversal of the real condition of things. This is true not only of the Helens and Cleopatras who have sacrificed their own countries and plunged nations into bloodshed in the effort to make men love them, but of the thousands of coquettes and jilts and shrews who, from circumstances beyond their control, have been obliged to content themselves with the humbler rôle of making commonplace men miserable in a commonplace way.

In all these cases it is the spectacle of weakness allowed to triumph over strength, because of that very strength. The mastering force of a great passion makes man chivalrously submissive to the object of his passion. The weaker party, dressed in the brief authority willingly relinquished by the stronger, is liable to be the cruel tyrant which weakness in power has always proved; not that woman is cruel consciously and of malice prepense. Man, when he is a tyrant, is a mere brute, coarsely indifferent to the sufferings of others; but woman, when intoxicated by the wine of vanity, has no suspicion of the exquisite nature of the tortures

which she can and does inflict upon the man whom she loves, provided he also loves her. Love and hate are so closely allied !

A clever Frenchman has said, and with some truth, that in England woman is the inferior of man, in France she is his equal, and in America his superior. Indeed, man in this country has deferred to her so long that woman is beginning to think she has the force that compels deference, and not the weakness that woos it. She has fought her way into so many avenues of intellectual effort hitherto closed to her, that she is beginning to look upon the very citadel as hers. She has even, in her exalted moments, vague, sad dreams of a good time coming when the coarse masculine intelligence which has so long mismanaged things in this world will be replaced by the finer intuitions and nobler instincts of the oppressed sex. In short, the vanity of woman in this day, when she is so strenuously imitating the masculine animal whom she despises so deeply, is beginning to assume a masculine tinge; it is a sort of *pseudo-conceit*.

With man the contrary is the case. Doubt is in the air. There is an upheaval of old traditions and conventionalities. Not only the superstructure, but the very foundations, of old faiths and old beliefs are threatened with annihilation. With no firm ground to stand upon, the self-confidence of the past has vanished. Disbelief in everything involves disbelief in one's self. A suspension of judgment on all disputed questions, on all questions that can possibly be a subject of dispute, leads to a suspension of judgment as to one's own ability to grapple with such questions. *Agnosco*, "I do not know," that is the attitude which the more advanced man of to-day schools himself to assume. But *agnosco* is never a word that could issue from the lips of a woman, especially an advanced woman. She "knows it all." She is always cock-sure, without the slightest apprehension of the conditions of rational certainty. She is a passionate advocate. But she has no conscience, either in attack or defence. The angels are always on her side, the devils against her. If she is irreligious, she is a shrieking atheist who sees only imposture and fraud in the great faiths that rolled out from the hearts of nations. If she is religious, she knows that doubt is devil-born, that humbly to confess your inability to cope with the mystery of existence is wilfully and with proud and wicked defiance to close your eyes to the light which she sees and which, therefore, you ought to see. One virtue must indeed be conceded to her. Whether she is championing the advocates of the Higher Criticism or whether she is pointing out the absurd and dangerous errors of Darwin or Spencer, she does it with the impartiality of one who has never read them, or, having read, has not the slightest comprehension of their real meaning.

Above all things, the advanced woman is a great reader of character. She dispenses with all the absurdly tardy methods of observation, comparison, analysis. She is ready at a glance to classify every new variety of man or woman. The air of infallibility with which she will discuss the inner emotions, the secret springs which move the actions of any mere chance acquaintance, illustrates her eagerness to simulate knowledge where the requisite conditions of accurate information are absolutely and obviously wanting. Of the endless diversity of individual temperament, of the intricacies and contradictions of human nature, of the abyssal depths of personality, she has no conception. She translates everything outside of herself into terms of her own consciousness. She imputes her own modes of thought and feeling to other individuals, just as the primitive savage

projects himself, his sentiments, and his intentions into even the inanimate world around him. In her heart she despises logic. She is conscious that her intuitions are far superior to any mere mental process. Yet no woman of spirit ever submitted without an explosion to the imputation of being illogical. Why should she? Was it man or woman who invented that most elementary of all formulas,—so simple, so beautiful, so easily adjusted to every argument that might arise,—“It is, because it is”? And with all his boasted superiority, has man ever mastered the true principle of logical fence, that if you want to say a single word upon a subject you must start off with a thousand upon another subject which has no possible relation thereto?

The advanced woman of to-day, in short, is as conceited and self-confident as can be. Elate with the sense of her capacity to do many things which her grandmother would have deemed impossible, she is ready to do anything that man has done. Her only complaint is that she is still debarred from many things which she could do quite as well, if not better than man. Yet we were right in calling her conceit a *pseudo*-conceit. Its strident and blatant arrogance has an underlying sense of impotence that is at once humorous and pathetic. Dr. Johnson's oft-quoted saying that a woman preaching is like a dog standing on its hind legs—the wonder isn't that it is done so well, but that it is done at all; this saying is ungallant and unfair. It is a coarse exaggeration of the truth. Let us allow for the coarseness and the exaggeration, and with this allowance still use it for our purposes. You might imagine a dog imbued with human consciousness standing on its hind legs and shouting out with great glee, “See I can do this as well as a man.” But you could never imagine the counter-proposition—you could never imagine a man shouting, “See, I can do this as well as a dog.”

Now, a woman's shrill self-assertiveness has the same qualities of conscious weakness and infirmity. She is continually boasting. She is continually drawing attention to her own performance and comparing them with those of man. At the Chicago Exposition she must even have a Woman's Pavilion, for the exploitation of the sex. Imagine a man's pavilion at the same fair! The glory of the lily is one thing and the glory of the oak is another. Woman can never be the equal of man in either physical or mental strength so long as she is handicapped by the burden of possible maternity. Nature does not lay a burden of that kind on any creature without taxing all the energies, mental and physical, to contribute to its support. Nor do we agree with George Eliot's misogynist, that woman shoulders this burden “in a poor makeshift sort of a way; it ha' better ha' been left to the man.” As the mother of the race, man, it must be conceded, would be a failure. Not only physically, but mentally and morally he is unfitted for so holy, delicate, and beautiful a mission. As the leader and the fighter in the battle of life, woman would also be a failure. Her vanity costs her much at present, it costs the human race much. Do not let her add to that cost by the *pseudo*-conceit of an assumed mental equality with man. Let her beware of adding to the failures of life a creature who has thrown aside beauty and not assumed strength, who has ceased to be a woman and has not learned to be a man.

WILLIAM S. WALSH.

#### TENDENCIES OF THE TURF.

EVERY nation has had its ruling sport. At present, so far as the great cities in this country, England, and France are concerned, the racing of thoroughbred running horses is the most prominent pastime. It is what